



Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this [seventeenth week](#) (May 5) of our 2025 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters and Associates serving in **Gambia** as well as all the people in that West African nation.

The Sisters belong to the **Anney Congregation** and began their West African mission in 1960 in Senegal - expanding to other countries in 2004. Today, in Gambia (also called 'The Gambia'), the Sisters minister in health



care, AIDS programs, women's promotion, education, and parish work. They serve in both English and 'Wolof' - a language of Senegal, Mauritania and The Gambia and the first language spoken by about a quarter of Gambians. [This article](#) by Anney Sister Rupanjoli Sja entitled "My Experience

in West Africa - Gambia (Basse Community)" describes her journey to the region and her experiences meeting school children (see image) and visiting the important work of local social agencies. And this [article](#) from last autumn describes a joyous event celebrating final and renewed vows of local sisters.



Country Background: As the smallest country in mainland Africa, the Republic of The Gambia is surrounded by Senegal except for its narrow western coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. Historically,

Arab traders provided the first written accounts of the area in the 9th and 10th centuries, and between the 14th and 18th centuries the region was disputed by the colonial powers of Portugal, Britain and France. During the transatlantic slave trade, as many as 3million people may have been taken from the region. Today, with a population of 2.8million (2025) - more than half of whom live in/around urban centres - Gambia's

economy is dominated by farming, fishing, and tourism. The country is known for its diverse ecosystems - especially around the central Gambia River. For example, the Kiang West National Park and Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve are home to diverse and abundant wildlife including monkeys, leopards, hippos, hyenas, and rare birds. Despite this ecological diversity, climate change is causing significant environmental threats with droughts and deforestation resulting in substantial soil erosion and desertification. Economically, Gambia made notable poverty reduction gains during the early 2000s which, while stalled in 2010, have seen the economy rebound in 2024. Notwithstanding its 5.8percent GDP growth (in the first half of 2024), the population faces high inflation rate and ongoing concerns about public debt. In fact, despite an International Monetary Fund grant of US\$3 billion in 2023, inflation rates during the same year exceeded 40percent with about a quarter of the population continuing to live in conditions of 'multidimensional poverty' (i.e.: lack of income, healthcare, education, and basic living standards like adequate housing and access to potable water). (Sources: Annecy Congregation website, International Monetary Fund, Statistica, The Gambia Poverty and Gender Assessment 2022 report, Wikipedia, World Bank, Worldometer)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family -- Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées – in 44 countries, listening to the heart of the world.